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LEGENDS



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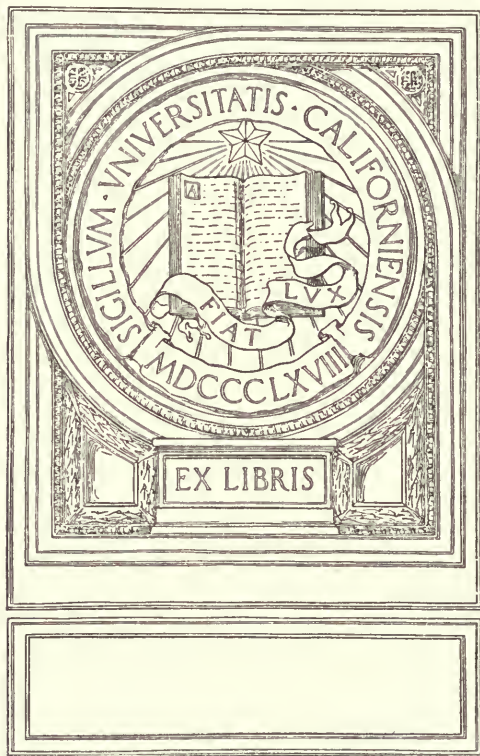


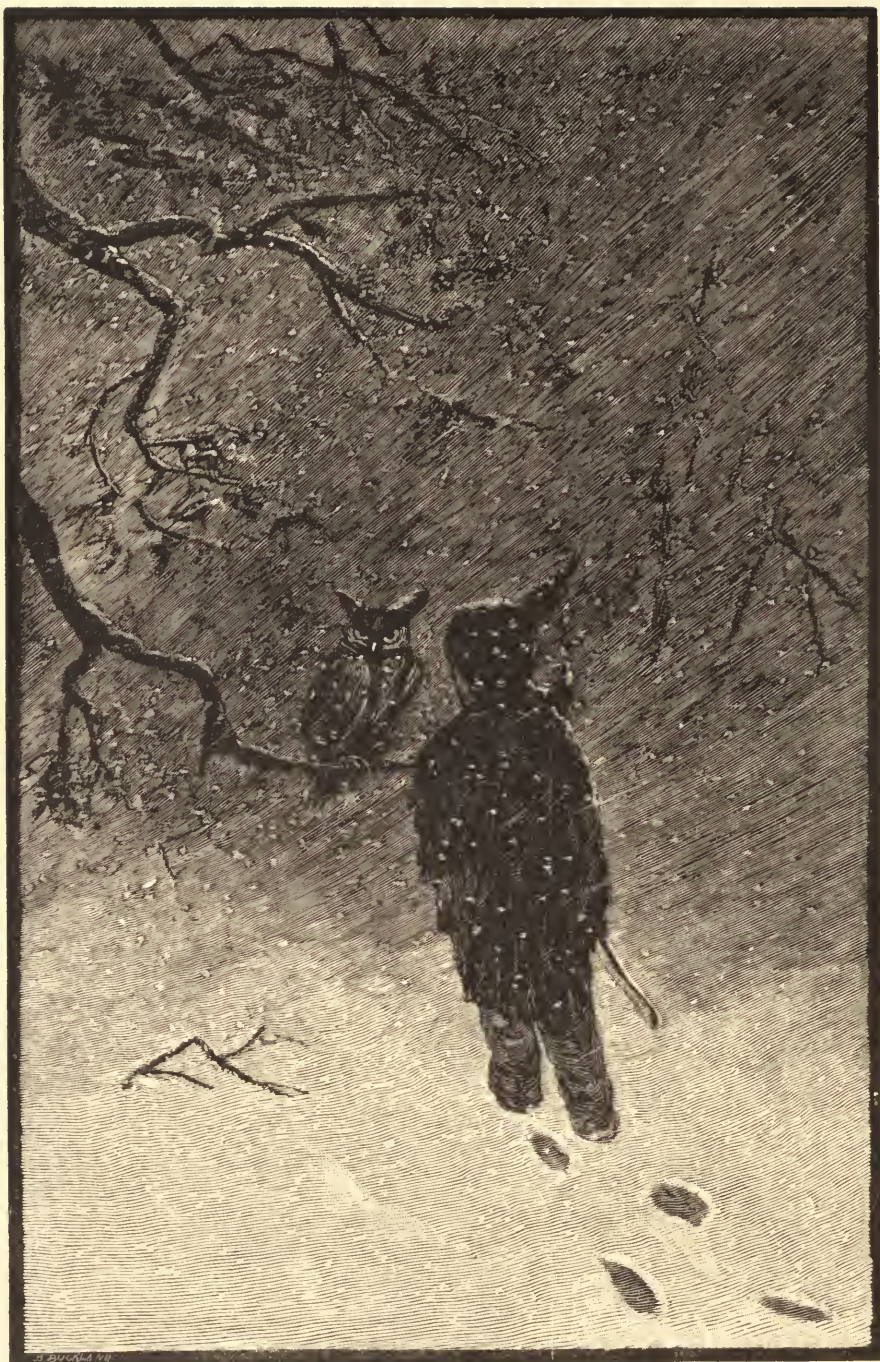
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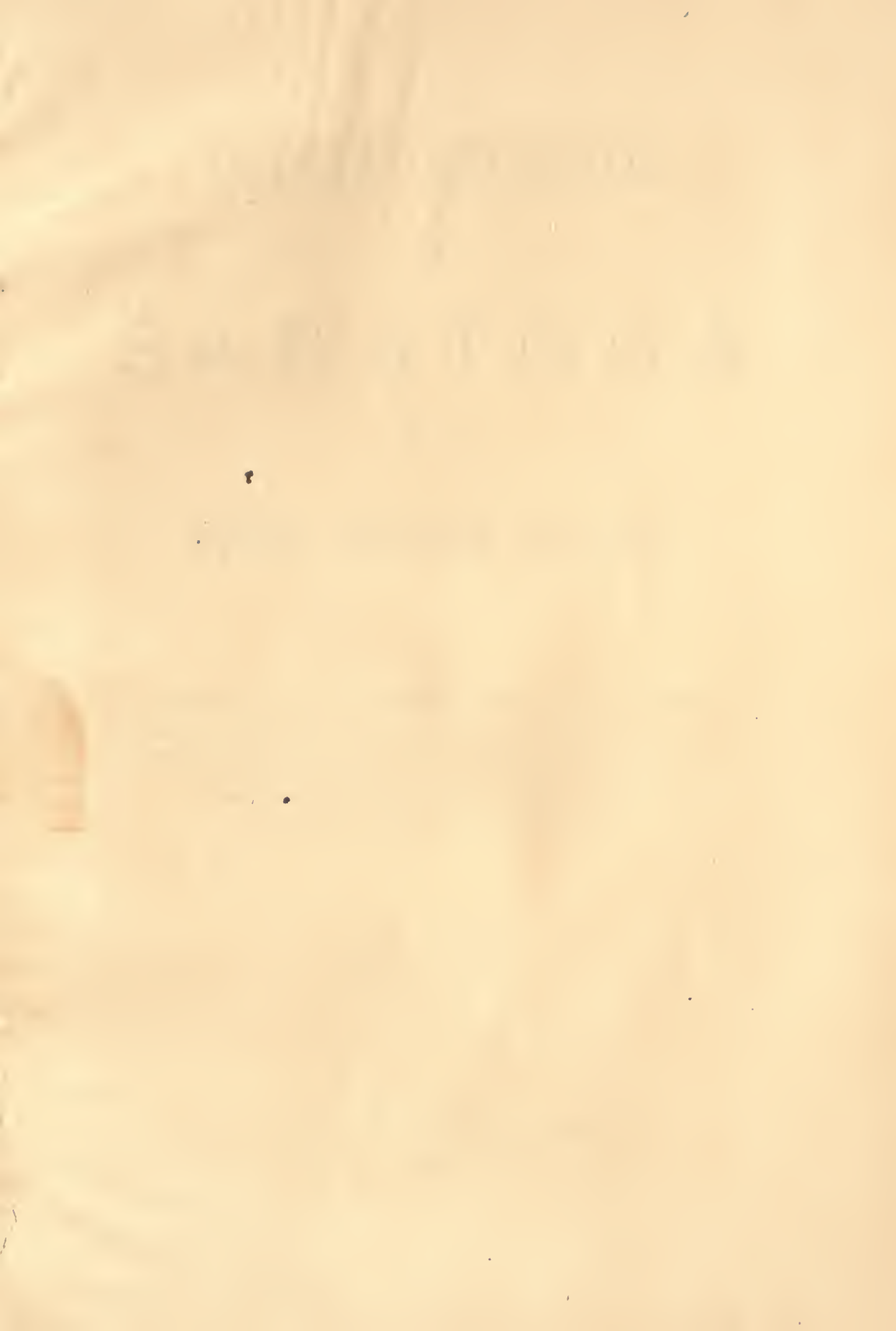




Frontispiece.

THE LOST HUNTER OF KAY-AD-ROS-SE-RA.

[Page 12.]





INDIAN LEGENDS
OF
SARATOGA
AND OF THE
UPPER HUDSON VALLEY.

BY
NATHANIEL BARTLETT SYLVESTER,
CORRESPONDING SECRETARY OF THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF SARATOGA, AND AUTHOR OF
HISTORICAL SKETCHES OF NORTHERN NEW YORK AND THE ADIRONDACK WIL-
DERNESS; A HISTORY OF SARATOGA COUNTY; A HISTORY OF RENSSELAER
COUNTY; A HISTORY OF ULSTER COUNTY; AND A HISTORY OF
THE CONNECTICUT VALLEY IN MASSACHUSETTS, ETC.

ILLUSTRATED.

UNIV. OF
CALIFORNIA

TROY, N. Y.:
N. B. SYLVESTER & CO.
1884.

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INDIAN LEGENDS

OF

SARATOGA.

CHAPTER I.

SA-RAGH-TO-GA AND KAY-AD-ROS-SE-RA.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH.

Ye say their conelike cabins
That clustered o'er the vale,
Have disappear'd as wither'd leaves
Before the autumn's gale ;
But their memory liveth on your hills,
Their baptism on your shore,
Your everlasting rivers speak
Their dialect of yore.

MRS. SIGOURNEY.

I.

IN the days of its old-time Indian occupancy the region of the great north wilderness in which the modern village of Saratoga Springs is now situated was not known to the Indians as *Sa-ragh-to-ga*, but formed a part of the old Mohawk hunting-ground, called by them *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*.

In the old time the name *Sa-ragh-to-ga* was applied by the Mohawks only to the hill-side region bordering on the Hudson River, and lying between the Hudson and Saratoga Lake.

This hill-side hunting-ground, called *Sa-ragh-to ga* by the Mo-

hawks, once belonged to the Mohicans, who called it in their language *A-mis-so-haen-diek*.

Of a truth the Mohicans were the original hereditary owners of the whole upper valley of the Hudson, from the Adirondaeks on the north to the Kaatskills on the south. In its broadly undulating sweep of wooded hills and shining waters this ancient home of the Mohicans was the fairest land in all the New World. But in the course of the savage warfare of the old wilderness this fair country, piece by piece, was wrested from the Mohicans by the fiercer Mohawks, until the last remnant of the Mohicans under Uncas was driven from their last resting-place in the southern part of their ancient home (in the year 1628), across the eastern Taghkanick Mountains, into the more hospitable valley of the Connecticut.

Upon entering into possession of their conquered country the Mohawks dropped the Mohican name of the old hill-side hunting-ground and called it, in their own more euphonious tongue, *Och-sech-ra'-ge*, *Och-ser'-a-ton-que*, or *Sar-ach-to-goe*, from which comes our modern Saratoga.

When the white man came, the Mohawks had long occupied this ancient *Sa-ragh-to-ga* in conjunction with *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, as their favorite summer hunting-ground.

This ancient combined hunting-ground of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* and *Sa-ragh-to-ga*, was of large extent, covering all the central part of what is now the county of Saratoga. It lay in the angle between the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers. It contained within its boundaries more than a million of acres. Its principal inland waters were the stream now called Kayaderosseras River, the expansion of this stream now called Saratoga Lake, Round Lake, whose Indian name was *Tion-een-de-how-we*, Ballston Lake, and Lake Desolation. To these waters must be added the mysterious "Medicine Springs," which the Indians believe the Great Spirit caused to flow for the healing of his forest children within the

shadowy depths of this old hunting-ground, now the site of the world's greatest watering-place, Saratoga Springs. To the north of ancient *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* lay one of the "Four Great Beaver Hunting Countries" of the Five Nations, called *Couch-sach-ra-ge*, "the dismal wilderness," now the famous Adirondack region. To the west lay the Mohawk villages. To the south lay the small Mohican hunting-ground which bordered the north bank of the Mohawk, called *Shen-nen-da-ho-wa*.

To these old hunting-grounds which bordered the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers, as soon as the shad-berry blossoms whitened the banks of the streams in the early spring-time, the hunting-bands of the Five Nations hastened to catch the fish which annually ascended those rivers in vast numbers.

In the summer, when the shad and herring fishing was over, these hunting-bands left the banks of the larger streams and built their lodges around the "Medicine Springs," in the heart of the *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*. To these springs the sluggish moose, the sprightly deer, the prowling bear, and other forest denizens flocked in droves, attracted by the saline properties of their breathing, bubbling waters. Of a truth, ancient *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* was the Indian hunter's paradise.

II.

In the year 1683 the Mohawk sachems of the first and second Castles, *Ai-ha-ga-ri*, *Ta-is-ka-noun-da*, and others representing their tribe, sold and conveyed by deed their old hunting-ground of *Sa-ragh-to-ga* to Peter Philippsen Schuyler, Johannes Wendel, Cornelis Van Dyk, and Jan Jansen Bleeker. In this conveyance the Mohicans joined to renounce their claims to the land, "because," says the deed, "in olden times the land belonged to them before the *Maquacs* took it from them."

As early as the year 1703 the Mohawk sachems also gave a deed to some New York land speculators, of what they supposed

to be but a small portion of their remaining hunting-ground, "enough for a good farm" they were falsely told, but which in the end proved to be the whole of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, containing nearly a million acres.

This Indian deed was followed by a patent bearing date the 2d day of November, 1708, and granting the whole of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, being a large part of Saratoga County, to Samuel Shelton Broughton, Rip Van Dam, Nanning Harmance, Johannes Beekman, and other gentlemen of New York, in all thirteen proprietors and their heirs forever. But for two generations these new proprietors of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* slept upon their "paper rights," and dying one after the other, the vast property was inherited by their heirs. But there were still other heirs to *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* in full possession.

About the year 1764, after the last French and Indian war was over, the parchment proprietors of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* began to look with longing eyes toward this old hunting-ground. With the view of asserting their title to the territory they sent on a few settlers, who began a clearing at the mouth of the Kayaderosseras River, on the shores of Saratoga Lake. In the fall of that year the Mohawk hunting-bands drove the settlers away. Learning from these settlers that they claimed the land by right of *purchase*, the Mohawks became alarmed, as they said they had never heard of any sale thereof to any white men.

The Mohawk nation at once appealed to Sir William Johnson, and were surprised to learn that the whole of their favorite hunting-ground had been deeded away by their fathers two generations before. A council was called, and "Abraham," the brother of King Hendrick, in an eloquent speech to Sir William, presented the case, and claimed that after the most diligent inquiry among the oldest of his people it could not be found that any such grant had ever been made, and demanded in behalf of his nation that the patent be forever relinquished.

Sir William warmly espoused the cause of the Indians, and after years of controversy a compromise was effected. The proprietors of the patent surrendered a large part of the land and paid the Mohawks five thousand dollars in full of all their claims for the remainder.

Having thus quieted their title, the proprietors at once took measures to survey and partition their lands. Commissioners in partition were appointed, and on the 22d day of February, 1771, the patent was divided into twenty-five allotments, and each allotment was subdivided into thirteen equal lots, that being the number of the original proprietors.

Upon casting lots, "lot No. 12" of the "sixteenth general allotment," which covers nearly the whole village of Saratoga Springs, and includes a large part of Woodlawn Park, fell to the share of the heirs of Rip Van Dam.

In the division of the region into districts by the colonial government at the close of the French and Indian wars, these two old hunting-grounds and patents were united into a single district.

The name, *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, was then dropped, and the district named after the smaller patent and called the "District of Saratoga."

Since then the grand old Indian name, *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, so far as territory is concerned, has fallen out of human speech, and is only heard in connection with the river and mountain chain, conspicuous features of the great hunting-ground so famous in Indian story.

III.

These two old Indian hunting-grounds of *Sa-ragh-to-ga* and *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* have been the scenes of some of the most important events in the history of the world.

This is owing to the singularity of their geographical position.

In order fully to understand this position it is necessary to study

their surroundings, in respect of vast mountain ranges and long and deep intervening valleys.

On the Atlantic slope of the continent two great mountain systems lie contiguous, the Appalachian to the southeast and the Canadian Laurentian to the northwest.

The Laurentian system stretches up along the northern shore of the St. Lawrence River from Labrador to the region of the upper lakes, and fills up the vast inhospitable region of the Saguenay, the Upper Ottawa, and the Lower Saskatchewan to the southern shore of Hudson's Bay, with its rugged mountain masses of hard crystalline rocks.

At one place only do the Laurentides cross the St. Lawrence River. That place is at the Thousand Islands. There a spur of these mountains crosses into Northern New York, carrying with them all the grim and rugged characteristics of their wild Canadian home into the great Adirondack wilderness.

The great Appalachian system, divided into numberless ranges, extends along about a hundred and fifty miles inland parallel with the Atlantic coast-line from the Gulf of St. Lawrence on the north, a distance of nearly two thousand miles, to the Gulf of Mexico on the south. Throughout their whole extent these two thousand miles of high Appalachian ranges form an almost impassable barrier between the valley of the Mississippi and the Atlantic sea-board. Of a truth, this long Appalachian Mountain barrier is scarcely broken, save at one place. That place is the deep gorge of the Hudson River. The Hudson River, in its passage from its head-springs among the Laurentian Adirondacks to the sea, rends the Appalachian Mountain system in twain from top to bottom.

This valley of the Hudson is one of the most remarkable mountain passes in the world. Extended northward it becomes the valley of Lake Champlain. This deep downward fold in the mountain ranges thus extends from the city of New York, on the Atlantic coast, due north, almost as straight as the crow flies, to

Montreal, on the St. Lawrence, a distance of nearly four hundred miles. From the centre of this long northern valley another deep valley quite as remarkable—the valley of the Mohawk—extends westward to the basin of the lower lakes.

Now in the angle formed by the junction and intersection of these two long and deep mountain passes are situated our two old Indian hunting-grounds of *Sa-ragh-to-ga* and *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*.

Through the long provincial and colonial period in these long valleys ran the old blood-stained war-trails.

For a hundred and seventy years after the white man came these long war-trails were continually crimsoned with blood, and during this period many a savage encounter took place within the sylvan shades of these two old Indian hunting-grounds.

But to-day we look around us upon a brighter scene, and see how a hundred years of smiling peace have made the fair borders of the grim old wilderness to “bud and blossom even as doth the rose.”

A hundred years ago scarcely no one came to these old springs of the forest *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* but serpents and wild beasts and still wilder men. To-day we see clustered around them the village of Saratoga Springs. To-day we see how many steps from all the nations of the earth, in the pomp of modern travel, still following the routes of the old war-trails, are turned toward this great watering-place, this Mecca of our country's highest civilization. To-day we see how all eyes are gazing at its sparkling, bubbling fountains, and how all lips are tasting of their healing waters.

CHAPTER II.

THE LOST HUNTER OF KAY-AD-ROS-SE-RA.

AN INDIAN TALE.

Here, plunging in a billowy wreath,
There, clinging to a limb,
The suffering hunter gasp'd for breath,
Brain reel'd and eye grew dim;
As though to 'whelm him in despair,
Rapidly changed the blackening air
To murkiest gloom of night,
Till naught was seen around, below,
But falling flakes and mantled snow,
That gleam'd in ghastly white.

ALFRED B. STREET.

I.

LAKE SARATOGA in the old time, lying like a gleaming mirror in its emerald setting of bordering pines, was the one beautiful central feature of the ancient Indian hunting-ground called *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*.

Of a truth this old hunting-ground of the Iroquois derives its name from this lake, for in the Indian tongue what is now known to us as Saratoga Lake was called *Can-ad-eri-os-Garunta*, meaning "the lake of the crooked stream," and from it this hunting-ground of the grim old wilderness in which the lake lay was called *Cai-ad-ros-se-ra*, or "the land of the beautiful lake of the winding river,"—in allusion to the Kayaderosseras River, of which this lake is an expansion.

II.

Many thousand moons ago, in the days of the elves and fairies of the Old World, while the Greek Artemis was hunting on the Taygetan Mountains, her chariot drawn by dappled deer with golden antlers, the New World too was peopled with its forest-nymphs, and many a spirit-bird rustled its shadowy pinions through the awful depths of its leafy solitudes.

The Indian believed in spirits, but he had the crudest possible ideas, if any at all, of an abstract religion. He had no priests, no altars, no sacrifice. His medicine-men were mere conjurors, yet he was superstitious to the last degree, and spiritualized everything in nature. In a word, he forever heard "eery tongues on sands and shores and desert wildernesses," he forever saw "calling shapes and beckoning shadows dire" on every hand. The mysterious realm about him he did not attempt to unravel, but bowed submissively before it. The flight or cry of a bird, the humming of a bee, the crawling of an insect, the turning of a leaf, the whisper of a breeze, as well as the gleam of the lightning and the awful roar of the thunder, were forever to him mystic signals of either good or evil import, by which he was guided in every action and relation of life. And he believed that in the happy hunting-grounds of the dead the shades of hunters, with the shades of bows and arrows in their hands, would follow the shades of animals and birds among the shades of trees and rocks in the shades of immortal forests, and glide in the shades of bark canoes over shadowy lakes and streams and carry them around the shades of dashing waterfalls.

The Indian also believed that this spirit life of inanimate things somehow possessed the mysterious power of putting on at will the shapes of the living forms of animals and birds, and thus appearing to men in their walks, so that sometimes the spirit of a mountain stream would come bounding toward them in the shape

of a deer, and sometimes the spirit of a lake would float on its surface as a graceful swan.

Each of these spirit forms of things, the Indians thought, always had some mission to accomplish of either good or evil import toward the human children of the forest,—sometimes to mislead and destroy, sometimes to guide aright and save.

Now, of all the spirits of the woods in the old time no one was so famous as the spirit of Lake Saratoga, which could assume first the bodily shape of an enemy and destroyer, that, being slain by its victim, would suddenly become magically transformed into a beautiful white dove, which was known far and near in forest tradition as the “White Dove of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*,” or the “good spirit-bird of the wilderness,” whose blessed mission was to save the lost wanderer, to stay at its savage height the fiercest onslaught of battle, and it was even whispered in Indian story that this spirit-bird had the awful power of bringing back the dead to life.

III.

The great hunting-ground of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, which lay in the angle between the Hudson and the Mohawk Rivers, was frequented by the Five Nations,—the Iroquois people of the rich valleys of Central New York,—and was celebrated in story for the abundance of its game and fish, and for the healing properties of the wonderful “medicine springs” that bubbled from the earth’s bosom with spiritual breathings in the depths of its virgin forests.

Sometimes in bands, sometimes solitary and alone, the fearless hunters followed the mighty moose through the tangled woods of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, or drove the timid deer in flocks before them, fleeing like scattered sheep from the wolf on mountain moorland when astray from the shepherd’s care.

Once upon a time it happened that a young brave from the Mohawk country had been hunting alone while on his first visit

to *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, and being on unfamiliar ground, unaccountably lost his way. It was late in the season of the hunter's moon, the leaves had mostly fallen from the trees, and the trembling snow-flakes of autumn began to whiten the brown grass of the wild meadows. The deer had mostly gone to their winter quarters in the deep evergreen woods, and the wild fowl had left the waters and were off on their southern journey. The Indians believe that when they are really lost, some evil spirit leads them not straight onward, but round and round an ever-narrowing circle, whose centre is death, which they have no power to leave, but like a serpent-charmed bird, must hopelessly perish there unless some good spirit comes to their relief and breaks the fatal spell. In vain the young brave wandered day after day. In vain he sought some token,—some broken twig or upturned stone,—some hum of bee or flight of bird, that might lead him home.

At length, when almost starved with hunger and broken down by despair, at the close of a weary day a large gray owl, seemingly emboldened by the gathering shades of the swiftly coming night, flew across his path on noiseless wing, and alighting low down on the bare projecting limb of a storm-blasted hemlock, turned his large, yellow, staring eyes upon the sufferer, and hooting loudly, seemed to mock at his calamity, and to say plainly, as if in words, "To whoo! to whoo! to whoo-oo! It is I who, it is I who, invisible to thee, have bound thee in my spell. It is I who have wound thee round and round the charmed circle and brought thee here to die. It is I who, with my wife and children there now in yonder hollow tree, await the coming winter to fatten off thy bones. To whoo! to whoo! It is time for thee to die, thou dog! Lie down, I say, and die. To whoo! to whoo! to whoo-oo!"

But the fiercest blood of the Mohawk still ran in the young brave's veins. Raising his bow with trembling arm, he let an arrow fly, and the taunting monster lay at his feet. Seizing his tomahawk, in his hotly kindling anger he would have struck the

prostrate bird, when lo! into the deepening shadows of the fast coming night, seemingly from out the dead body of the owl, flew a beautiful white dove. The storm ceased; the clouds broke away.

The dove, fluttering along on silver wing in the soft light of the rising hunter's moon, now led the young brave on another and a better pathway, just as some mother-bird in spring-time is wont to lead one from her helpless hiding brood when danger threatens.

It was the spirit-bird of the wilderness,—the white dove of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*. It had come on its mission that through death into life, through night into light, through sorrow into joy, it might lead the wanderer home.

On the morrow the young brave, led by the fluttering dove, found his elm bark canoe on the shore of the lake. Wending his way to the valley of the Mohawk, often around the winter camp-fire he told the story of the white dove to the wondering maidens of his tribe. To this day his story is a living legend of the Mohawks.

CHAPTER III.

THE BATTLE OF THE WILD MEADOW.

AN INDIAN LEGEND OF KAY-AD-ROS-SE-RA.

Once this soft turf, this rivulet's sands,
Were trampled by a hurrying crowd,
And fiery hearts and armed hands
Encountered in the battle-cloud.
* * * * *
Now all is calm, and fresh, and still;
Alone the chirp of flitting bird,
And talk of children on the hill,
And bell of wandering kine are heard.

BRYANT.

I.

THE Indians who dwelt on the Atlantic slope, in the valley of the St. Lawrence, and around the shores of the great lakes were divided into two great families of nations. These two great families were known to Europeans as the Iroquois family and the Algonquin family.

These two families of Indian nations differed radically both in language and in lineage, as well as in many of their manners and customs.

The principal nations of the Iroquois family were grouped around the lower lakes. The Five Nations of Central New York, who were the true Iroquois, were the leading people of this family. Their sister nations of the same family were the Andastes in the valley of the Susquehanna, the Eries, the Hurons, the Neutral

Nation, and the Tobacco Nation of Canada, and the Tuscaroras of the Carolinas, who united with the Five Nations in the year 1715.

Among all the Indian nations of the New World there were none so politic and intelligent, none so fierce and brave, none with so many germs of heroic virtues mingled with their savage vices as the true Iroquois, the people of the Five Nations. They were a menace and a terror to all the surrounding nations, whether of their own or of Algonquin speech. They followed the war-path, and their war-cry was heard westward to the Mississippi and southward to the great gulf. The poor *Montagnais*, on the far-off Saguenay, would start from their midnight sleep and run terror-stricken from their wigwams into the forest when dreaming of the dreadful Iroquois. They were truly the conquerors of the New World, and were justly styled the "Romans of the West."

"My pen," wrote the Jesuit Father Ragueneau, in 1650, in his *Relations des Hurons*,—"my pen has no ink black enough to describe the fury of the Mohawks."

Surrounding these few kindred bands of the Iroquois family dwelt the much more numerous nations of the Algonquin family.

To the Algonquin family belonged the Mohicans and other tribes of the Hudson River, all the New England tribes, and the nations of the lower St. Lawrence valley.

The Algonquin nations of the St. Lawrence valley, who subsisted mostly by the chase, were often during the long Canadian winters, when game grew scarce, driven by hunger to subsist for months together on the buds and bark, and sometimes upon the young wood, of forest-trees. Hence their hereditary enemies, the more favored Mohawks, called them in derision and in mockery of their condition, *Ad-i-ron-daks*, that is to say, "tree-eaters."

In the old time between these two families of nations there was eternal war. From their situation in the angle of the great northern and western war-trails, the old hunting-grounds of

H. Buckland.



THE BATTLE OF THE WILD MEADOW.

Sa-ragh-to-ga and *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra* formed the "dark and bloody ground" of old-time Indian warfare.

II.

The Mourning Kill is a little stream that rises near the line of the towns of Galway and Charlton, in Saratoga County, and running thence southeasterly through the town of Ballston until it crosses both railroad tracks of the Delaware and Hudson Canal Company; a mile northerly of East Line it bends to the northward and soon finds its way into the Kayaderosseras River. From the outlet of Ballston Lake at East Line to the Mourning Kill, there was a portage or carrying-place in the old time on one of the main Indian trails, which led from the Mohawk to the St. Lawrence. When the Indians travelled in their canoes they always took this route, as by it they had few carrying-places, this one at East Line being one of the longest.

The Mourning Kill, therefore, being on one of the great war-trails which ran between the Algonquin tribes of Canada and the Iroquois nations of the Mohawk valley, who were at perpetual war with each other, was in the old time the scene of many a savage encounter.

It so happened once upon a time, in the moon of roses, that five hundred Mohawk warriors on their way to the St. Lawrence, while passing down the Mourning Kill, met about an equal number of Adirondack braves who were also on the war-path. The place where they met was a wild meadow through which the stream wandered in sluggish winding tide, its banks bordered with willows. The grass of the meadow was sprinkled with flowers, and on the boughs of the willows the birds had hung cosey nests for callow young. It was dewy morning when the warriors met in this sweet wild meadow and turned it into a field of blood and terror. All day long the battle raged. Oh! who can ever tell us one-half the

horrors of those dreadful forest conflicts? Worse than ravening wolves strong warriors clinched each other in deadly embrace, each tearing the other's bosom with maniac hands and sucking the life-blood each from the other's quivering heart with lips trembling in death.

Nature herself was shocked at the spectacle of this dreadful warfare between her forest children. At the sight of it the rose blushed to crimson in deepest shame, the water-lily turned white as snow in terror, the willow bent low her boughs in sorrow, and the pendent branches of the elms wept showers of tear-drops.

As this battle raged an eagle hovered over it. Circling high above the blood-stained meadow the wildest screams of this bird of war seemed but the echo of the Indian's fiendish yell. Each side seemed to look upon the presence of this bird as to themselves an omen of victory, and each answering its screams with their own, rushed on with tenfold fury.

At length as the sun was sinking low in the western sky, the eagle himself seemed to tire of the fight, and swooping down, alighted on the limb of a pine-tree that bent over the meadow, folded his wings, and sat gazing upon the still undecided encounter. Then it was that a strange revulsion of feeling seized simultaneously each struggling, surviving warrior. Each warrior now on either side suddenly ceased fighting, and each for the first time became impressed in some mysterious way that the bird which they supposed had so long cheered them on to victory was not a friend, but really was some forest-demon that was luring them all to their swift destruction. Each surviving warrior then on either side, in the lull of the fight, for a moment stood gazing at the daring bird in anger. Then with one accord each warrior on either side drew his bow toward the bird. Five hundred arrows tore through the eagle's breast, and the bird fell with a rushing sound into the grasses of the blood-stained meadow.

But scarcely had the eagle's mangled body reached the ground

before it seemed transformed into a gentle dove of wondrous beauty. The dove at once flew upward with music-whispering wing and perched upon the eagle's seat. There had been a thousand angry arrows ready to strike the swooping eagle. In all those savage serried ranks of blood-stained warriors there was not a single shaft that dared to harm the dove. It was the spirit-bird of the wilderness, the white dove of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, that had come as a blessed messenger of peace to break the spell of the battle-demon.

The warriors had met as foes, they went away as friends. Returning each year in the moon of roses to mourn their dead, one generation after another coming even until the white man came, the little stream has ever since borne its name of the "Mourning Kill."

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESCUE OF THE MAIDEN QUEEN.

AN INDIAN TALE OF KAY-AD-ROS-SE-RA.

Sweet bird ! thy bow'r is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear ;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year !

LOGAN.

I.

AFTER the happy peace brought about by the influence of the white dove of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*, at the battle of the Wild Meadow of the Mourning Kill, the united bands of Adirondacks and Mohawks and their children dwelt together under the Mohawk sachemship for many thousand moons on the western shores of Lake Saratoga. The eastern shore belonged to the Mohicans, but all the nations were then at peace. There was abundance of fish in the waters of the lake, and on its banks they planted their fields of corn and beans and squashes. In the forests on every hand there roved innumerable deer, and in the swamps at the headwaters of the streams which ran into the lake the beavers built their lodges and fell an easy prey to the skill of the young hunters.

It is doubtless known to the reader that even at the present day it is the custom of many Indian tribes to subject their young braves, before they are thought fit to go upon the war-path, to some severely trying ordeal,—some torture of the flesh by sharp instruments and fire to test their powers of endurance. So severe

is this ordeal that the weak cannot survive it, and if the young Indian flinches and shrinks from the fiery trial he is forever after treated as a woman and made to do menial service for the braves.

Now it was the custom of the Indians who lived on the banks of Lake Saratoga not only to submit their young braves to an ordeal of torture to fit them for the war-path, but to submit their young maidens also to a watery ordeal so severe in its nature that only those who could pass it were thought worthy to live and become the mothers of generations of Indian braves.

This ordeal was that the young maidens, in their thirteenth summer, should swim unaided across the lake from a point on the western shore of the lake, near the mouth of the Kayadrosseras River, to the high hill on the other side, now called Snake Hill, and in the old time *Tor-war-loon-da*, "the hill of storms." This part of the lake is now famous for its modern regattas, and Snake Hill still retains its ancient reputation as the place of many storms.

II.

It once happened that an old sachem of the united tribes had an only child, a daughter, to succeed him. It was in her thirteenth summer, in the height of the happy green-corn moon, that the time came for her to pass the ordeal of water. The people all assembled on the shore of the lake to witness the trial of their maiden princess, one band and the old sachem, her father, on Snake Hill, and the other with the maiden on the other side of the lake at the accustomed station. The day was calm, as it is sometimes wont to be even on this easily-ruffled lake, in the month of the green-corn moon, and on the given signal the maiden ran down the bank of the lake and, bounding like a nimble doe into the water, boldly struck out for the other side, where her father in anxious solicitude was awaiting her coming.

It was a long distance to swim for a child of her tender years,



THE SPIRIT-BIRD OF KAY-AD-ROE-SE-RA.

and although it was possible for most of the maidens of her tribe to accomplish the feat, yet while in plain sight of the other shore, where her father and his people stood, the Indian princess felt her strength give way.

She was the daughter of a long line of Mohawk kings that had never known fear, and believed that her time had come to die. In low, sweet accents, like the voice of some wild forest bird, she chanted her death-song, filling the still evening air with unearthly melody.

But what is that? A new danger now awaits the struggling maiden. The old sachem sees high up in the southern sky a little speck, which, swiftly coming nearer, proves to be a monstrous bird of prey. Seeing the maiden in the waters of the lake, the monster bird swooped down with lightning speed, and striking his talons into her hair, while his wings lashed the water into foam, he raised her form high above the surface of the lake in the attempt to carry her away to his eyrie. But the young maiden was too heavy for the monster bird; he, to save himself, let go his hold, and the terrified girl fell back into the water. As she came to the surface after her plunge, the savage bird was poised for another swoop, and taking her again, he raised her high in the air once more. Yet she was too heavy for him this time also, and he again tried to let her go. But in her agony the young maiden had this time grasped with both hands the legs of the monster bird. Hanging on to them with the desperation of death, after her weight had overcome him, she pulled him downward with increasing momentum, and the dusky maiden and monster bird soon sank together deeply beneath the surface of the sleeping lake, the water closing over both bird and maiden apparently forever. The father-sachem in his agony and the people around him saw it all, and as the maiden for the last time sank beneath the wave a wail went up to heaven that awoke the echoes of the lake from mountain to shore.

But in a moment more, "See! see!" the people cried, and, lo!

the ripples from the sinking girl had scarcely broken upon the shore at the father's feet before her faultless form in joyous maiden beauty arose again from her terrible baptism.

While rising upon her feet, as she first struck the shallow water and waded toward the shore, the father-sachem and the people, with deepest awe, saw sitting upon the head of the maiden a dove of wondrous beauty, its silvery plumage shining with starlight lustre, in brilliant contrast with her dripping raven tresses. With quivering lips the people whisper to each other, "It is the white dove of the *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*—the spirit-bird of the old wilderness—that has again come on its mission to save."

But the father-sachem, where is he? Why does he not greet his child? Alas! the tremendous revulsion from deepest agony to wildest joy has snapped the silver cord that bound his trembling soul to his throbbing heart, and when his daughter, the radiant maiden crowned with the silver dove, steps upon the shore her father is dead, her people fall prostrate before her: she is queen of the Mohawks.

From her time, in honor of her rescue by the white dove, long after considered the *totem* or guardian spirit of her people, the succession to the sachemship has always been in the female line.

And now thousands of white men and maidens who annually visit Lake Saratoga in the happy time of the "moon of roses" and the "green-corn moon" are, like the dusky men and maidens of the old time, themselves waiting for the coming of a white dove,—not, perhaps, the spirit-bird of the old wilderness, but rather the dove that came down on the head of the Master as He rose sinless and pure, dripping with the waters of His baptism, in far-off Jordan.

CHAPTER V.

THE SPIRIT-BRIDE OF THE TAS-SA-WAS-SA.

AN INDIAN TALE OF YADDO.

"Snowy wings of peace shall cover
All the pain that clouds our way,
When the weary watch is over,
And the mists have cleared away.
We shall know as we are known,
Never more to walk alone,
In the dawning of the morning,
When the mists have cleared away.'

I.

UPON what are now the heights of Yaddo,* the charming summer home of Mr. Spencer Trask at Saratoga, there was, in the old time, a famous Indian summer camping-ground.

For many and many a summer in the old time, long before the white man came, this camping-ground was occupied by a band of Mohican braves and their families. The permanent home of this Mohican band of summer visitors was then far away on the other side of the broad *Shat-ta-muck*,—as they called the Hudson,—and was situate among the foot-hills of the towering *Tagh-kan-icks*, in the southern part of Rensselaer County, on the banks of a little stream called the *Tas-sa-was-sa*.

* "The name 'Yaddo' was given by Mr. Trask's little daughter. She said she had a name which sounded like 'shadow,' but it was not that, for it was bright and not dark."—*Saratoga paper*.

The *Tas-sa-was-sa*, still known by that name, is a confluent of the Kinderhook Kill. At one part of its course it spreads into a lake, which in the old time was much frequented by the Mohicans as a fishing-ground. Near the border of this little lake, called also *Tas-sa-was-sa*, our summer visitors of Yaddo had their winter wigwams.

In the old time, as it does now, a brook found its way through the ravine which skirts the heights of Yaddo, on the north and west. At the point where the ravine broadens into the wide valley of the Bear Swamp a colony of beavers, in the old time, with industrious care had built their dam high across the stream. The obstructed waters were thus set back over all the low land of the ravine, and spread out into a lakelet like the one which now sleeps at Yaddo, so fair and bright in its lovely woodland bower.

This little lakelet of the beavers in the old time at Yaddo, as the Indian children played along its banks and sported on its waters in their bark canoes, they used to call, in memory of their other home beyond the Hudson, "*The Little Tas-sa-was-sa*," and by that name the stream and lakelet were long known in Indian story.

II.

It has been seen that, at the opening of our story, the Mohicans dwelt beyond the south bank of the Hudson, in the same hunting-ground which was the home of the great Uncas and the remnant of his nation when the white man first came.

But this had not always been so. The true, original, and ancient hereditary ancestral home and hunting-ground of the once powerful Mohican nation, as has been seen in the opening chapter, was the whole magnificent valley of the Upper Hudson, in its broad and beautiful sweep from the Adirondacks on the north to the Kaatskills on the south.

Of this broad, fair land Uncas was the hereditary king. From

this land of their fathers the Mohicans were finally driven by the Mohawks.

In the old time, therefore, this camping-ground upon the hill-side and lakelet at Yaddo was situate upon disputed ground.

The Mohawks claimed it as a part of their ancient *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*. As its waters ran into the Hudson from off the slope of the western valley of that river, the Mohicans claimed that, in accordance with ancient custom, it formed a part of their domain.

And so many a bloody encounter occurred between the Mohawks and the Mohicans for the possession of this hill-side and lakelet at Yaddo.

It was during the fierce struggle for the mastery of this fair land between the Mohicans and Mohawks that the main incidents of our story occurred at the summer home of a Mohican band at Yaddo.

III.

It so happened that once upon a time the Mohawks were engaged in distant wars, and leaving the hill-side at Yaddo for many summers unmolested, Peace for a season spread her white wings even over the blood-stained wilderness of *Kay-ad-ros-se-ra*.

Among the Mohican braves who had come to the banks of the lakelet at Yaddo during this time of peace was a young chief, whose name was *We-quagan*.

During this time there came also to Yaddo an old Mohican warrior, whose name was *We-wa-wis*. In the wigwam of *We-wa-wis* dwelt with him an only child, a daughter, whose name was *A-wo-nunsk*.

The young chief *We-quagan* was smitten with the charms of the daughter of *We-wa-wis*, and so he made her his wife, and they were married in the moon of strawberries.

On the very day of their wedding *A-wo-nunsk*, the bride of *We-quagan*, went with some of the women of her clan to gather

the strawberries which grew in a little meadow that lay on the verge of the great swamp on the other side of the lakelet.

The women crossed the lake in their bark canoes, which they moored along the shore in the Indian fashion, leaving them all ready to be pushed out into the lake at a moment's warning.

After stepping on shore, *A-wo-nunsk* and her companions soon reached the little meadow, and in a short time they all had their baskets filled with the luscious berries.

Then, all unconscious of their impending fate, they set out to return. But before they had reached the verge of the meadow the piercing war-cry of the dreaded Mohawks startled all the forest echoes round about them.

With wild shrieks of despair, the Mohican women ran toward their canoes. Like ravening wolves, a dozen Mohawk warriors emerged from the gloomy confines of the Bear Swamp, where they had been lurking, and, pursuing the defenceless women, soon overtook all but *A-wo-nunsk*, and tomahawked and scalped them without mercy.

A-wo-nunsk, fleet as the bounding doe, outran the rest, and, eluding her pursuers, reached the shore of the lakelet. With the agility of the mountain-cat she sprang into her lightly-moored canoe, and, yielding to her swift momentum, the boat, with its precious freight, sped like an arrow shot from a bow out into the lake.

But just behind her on the shore was a tall and sinewy Mohawk war-chief, painted and plumed for the war-path. With equal agility the savage warrior jumped into another canoe, which also, with his added weight, shot out swiftly into the lake, in hot pursuit of *A-wo-nunsk*.

In the mean time, aroused by the yells of the Mohawks and the death-shrieks of their own women, all the Mohican braves had gathered upon the opposite shore.

And there, standing upon the shore horror-stricken, *We-quagan*

saw in the centre of the lake his bride of an hour, with quivering limbs and streaming hair, plying her paddle with the energy of desperation, trying in vain to escape from the stronger arm of the Mohawk.

Yet the Mohicans dare not let an arrow fly, for fear of striking *A-wo-nunsk*.

In the eagerness of the chase, the wily Mohawk did not become aware of his dangerous proximity to the Mohicans until it was too late to retrieve his error. Dropping his paddle, he raised his bow, and sent an arrow through the heart of the struggling *A-wo-nunsk*. As the arrow pierced her body she raised herself to an upright position in her canoe, and, reaching out her arms toward her husband, gave him one last imploring look, and fell headlong into the lake.

Quick as thought the Mohawk then turned himself in his canoe, facing the shore from whence he came. But he had not gone a boat's length before an avenging arrow from a Mohican's bow pierced his body, and he, too, fell into the lake with his victim, their mingling blood dyeing the waters, the encrimsoned ripples soon seeking either shore.

As *We-qua-gan* stood in speechless horror viewing the crimson wavelets circling to the shore laden with the heart's blood of his stricken bride, a dark, thick mist arose from the blood-dyed waters of the lake, and enveloping its shores in its murky folds, gathered overhead into a black and angry cloud, that covered all the landscape with darkening gloom.

And the shadow of this dreadful cloud, which long after hung over Yaddo, cast a withering blight over all the land. Nothing more grew there, and the whole region roundabout became from that time forward a waste land, over which the howling winds drifted the shifting sands.

Such was the awful shadow which in the old time fell upon Yaddo.

IV.

The war once begun, was continued by the Mohawks until they drove the last of the Mohicans from the border-land.

But under the shadow which hung over Yaddo, blighting the land, there was no more game there, and no one came there, either Mohawk or Mohican, but *We-quagan*.

Every summer, in the moon of strawberries, *We-quagan*, with a few faithful followers, would come to the lakelet at Yaddo, as if seeking his long-lost bride.

And as *We-quagan* stood upon the shore of the lakelet, upon the anniversary of their wedding-day and of the tragic death of his bride, gazing with tearful eyes into the misty gloom, which still hung like a pall over all the land, the spirit-form of *A-wo-nunsk* would appear to him there struggling in mortal agony in her canoe to escape from the spirit-form of the savage Mohawk, and the dreadful scene would there in the thick gloom be enacted over again each year to his horrified vision in all its terrible reality. Again would he seem to hear her wild cry of despair, and again would he seem to see her stretch out her imploring arms in vain for him to save.

At length *We-quagan* had become an old man almost ready to die. For the last time he made his annual pilgrimage to the lakelet at Yaddo.

This time as he stood upon the shore, supported by his companion braves, all peering into the misty gloom of the awful cloud-shadows, looking for the coming again of the vision of the spirit-form of his bride, a strange ethereal brightness began to gleam through the darkness low down over the lake, as if a luminous mist were rising from its turbid waters.

And, lo! in the midst of this strangely-rising brightness to their entranced vision appeared the matchless form of *A-wo-nunsk* clothed in all the beauty of her young womanhood.

But now no one pursued her. No longer touched by mortal fear, she seemed to walk upon the waters unmoved in the bright centre of the fast-rising luminous cloud, and with beaming eyes beckon lovingly to *We-quagan*.

For one vast, supreme moment *We-quagan* gazed enraptured upon the beatific vision with a look of unutterable joy. Then throwing up his arms, he cried, "Oh! *A-wo-nunsk*, my bride! *I go, I go to A-wo-nunsk!*" and fell prostrate upon the shore.

When his companions looked upon him he was dead.

Turning again their eyes toward the beautiful vision, they saw with wonder the dark cloud overhead rent in twain, and through its rifts came a burst of sunshine driving away the shadows from Yaddo.

And with the sun-burst through the rift of the dark cloud came to their ears the sound of low, sweet music. All around them the air seemed filled with music-whispers, like the rhythmical rustling of angels' wings.

Looking again toward the fast-brightening lakelet, the surviving braves saw gently rising over its now shining waters the spirit-forms of *We-quagan* and *A-wo-nunsk*—husband and wife—again united in loving endearment, winging their joyful way along the bright trail of the sun-burst, through the widening cloud-rifts, into the spirit-land.

And thus the shadows were lifted forever from Yaddo.

For the clouds had all passed away with the sun-burst, and Yaddo was no longer a land of darkness and blight, but from that day became a bright, a blooming, and a beautiful land,—THE LAND OF NO SHADOW.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LEGEND OF THE DIAMOND ROCK.

AN INDIAN TALE.

He that sounds them has pierced the heart's hollows,
The place where tears are and sleep,
For the foam-flakes that dance in life's shallows
Are wrung from life's deep.

Fugitive Poem.

I.

THE village of Lansingburgh is pleasantly situated upon the east bank of the Hudson directly opposite the point where the Mohawk, coming in from the westward and striking the valley of the Hudson, separates into three or four "sprouts," and soon mingling its troubled waters with the more placid tide of the larger river, rests from its labors.

The valley of the Hudson at this point, along its easterly bank, is not more than half a mile in width, and terminates in a range of hills running parallel with the river, which rise somewhat abruptly to the height of two or three hundred feet. Between this range of high hills and the river the village nestles in a complete forest of shade-trees. Troy, its younger sister, but three miles below it, swelling into the pomp and pride of a city, long since absorbed the business growth of the village, and left it a retreat for quiet homes. The city has drawn away from the village its counting-houses, its warehouses,—in a word, its more sordid interests, but has left to the village its schools, its churches, its fire-

sides, around which cluster, after all, life's dearest hopes and most enduring joys.

II.

High up on the brow of the hill overlooking the village, a huge mass of calciferous sand-rock of the Quebec group crops out near the bordering strata of Hudson River slate and shale, and terminates in a peak rising some sixty feet above the surrounding surface, with jagged, sloping sides, extending over an area of half an acre or more of ground. This rock, throughout its whole structure, is filled with beautiful shining quartzose crystals, and its surface glitters in the sunlight as if it were covered all over with sparkling gems. Hence it is known far and near as the Diamond Rock.

This rock can be seen from every part of the village, rising up against the eastern sky like a miniature mountain peak, and is often pointed out by the villagers to the tourist and stranger as an object of interest well worthy of a visit. From its summit can be seen the whole upper valley of the Hudson, from the Kaatskills on the south to the Adirondacks on the north—a sweep of view extending more than a hundred miles along the river. No fairer scene anywhere on earth greets the human vision.

While this valley was under the dominion of the red man, so prominent a natural object as this rock was, of course, regarded as a landmark. Situated as it was, overlooking the confluence of two important rivers, which then, as well as now, marked out the great highways of travel westward to the great lakes, and northward to the great river leading from them to the ocean, this rock was a beacon to the wanderer. From its top could be seen far off in the distance the camp-fire of the northern invader, as well as the welcome signal of the western ally coming to the rescue.

III.

In the summer of 1858, while spending a few weeks in the great northern wilderness of New York, in company with some friends,* I heard from the lips of an old Indian a legend of this Diamond Rock. We were encamped upon a little island on the northern shore of the Raquette Lake, opposite the mouth of the Marian River. From this point it was our practice to make excursions to the different points of interest around the lake. Upon a sultry day in August we all started upon a trip to the summit of the Blue Mountain, which lies twenty miles to the eastward, and can be seen from all parts of the lake, looming grandly up against the sky.

Our course was up the Marian River, and through the Eckford chain of lakes, the last one of which, its waters clear as crystal, sleeps at the mountain's base. We expected to be absent from our camp two or three days, so we proceeded leisurely upon our journey. In the skiff with myself were two others of the party, and our little craft, for some reason or other, was far in advance of all the rest. Toward nightfall we entered a small lake, and while paddling slowly along so that the others might the more readily overtake us, we saw a deer at the distance of a mile ahead of us, standing in the edge of the water, quietly feeding among the lily-pads. Bright visions of venison-steaks steaming hot from the embers of our camp-fire for supper and breakfast instantly arose before us, and we at once determined to secure the game

* Prof. Samuel W. Johnson, of New Haven, Rev. William H. Lockwood, of Eau Claire, Wis., Leonard C. Davenport and W. Hudson Stephens, of Lowville, were of this party, with Amos Spofford and Al. Higby as guides. While at the Raquette we encamped on Osprey Island, since then the camping-ground of Rev. Mr. Murray, of Adirondack fame. While we were there Prof. Agassiz, Prof. Benedict, Prof. Longfellow, and Mr. Thoreau were occupying the "Philosopher's Camp," on the Saranac.

if it were possible, and thus be able to realize our ideal in that particular.

My companions soon landed me upon the shore, which was covered with a dense mass of evergreens reaching almost down to the water's edge. With rifle in hand I walked noiselessly along the bank to the point directly opposite the place where we had seen the deer standing. Carefully separating the overhanging boughs so as to obtain a view of the lake, much to my disappointment I discovered that the deer was no longer visible.

Those visions of venison-steaks began to appear wonderfully like dissolving views. Determined, however, to investigate the matter further, I stepped down the bank into the lake, and waded out a little distance in the shallow water. Turning toward the shore, I saw the deer skulking just above the water's edge, partially hidden by the foliage, not ten rods distant from where I stood. In another instant the sharp crack of my rifle reverberated round the shores of the peaceful lake, and a splendid doe lay sprawling before me upon the bright sandy beach. As I approached the dying deer, she raised her head with a piteous, pleading look, that stung me with remorse for the ruin I had wrought.

The dying deer sheds tears. Soon those pleading eyes began to fill with tears, and the bright drops to trickle down upon the sand. They seemed to me like human eyes, like those deep spiritual eyes sometimes seen in woman that haunt our dreams forever after.

IV.

While I stood half entranced by those tearful eyes, I was startled from my reverie by a slight movement of the bushes on the bank. In a moment they parted, and an aged Indian emerged from the forest. Giving me a grunt of recognition, he stopped short, and stood for a moment gazing at the dying deer. Then shrugging his shoulders, he broke the silence, saying in broken English,

"White man, you good shot. Deer very much plenty round here. Me Indian kill two yesterday. Deer always cry so like squaw when me kill um."*

As the tears were falling fast upon the beach, the old Indian stooped down and gathered a handful of the coarse sand wet with their flow. Pointing out to me some crystals that were brightened by the moisture of the tears, he again spoke :

"Pale-face, look here. See how tears make pretty stones to shine very much. White man, come to Indian's wigwam to-night. Me tell white man good story."

Our whole party soon came up to where we stood, and as it was already time to look out for a camping-ground for the night, we concluded to accept the Indian's kindly proffered hospitality.

He said his wigwam was half a mile farther up the lake, and we took our deer into the skiff and proceeded thither. As we paddled quietly along, the sun was setting behind us. We saw before us the departing sunlight, followed by the evening shadows, crawl gradually up the mountain-side and disappear on its summit. Then the soft blue haze that all day long had lingered round the mountain soon assumed purple and golden hues, until the whole atmosphere in which we moved seemed saturated with a thousand

* Hark ! the hunter's piercing cry !
 See the shafts unerring fly !
 Ah ! the dappled fool is stricken,—
 See him tremble—see him sicken.
 All his worldly comrades flying,
 See him bleeding, panting, dying ;
 From his eyelids wan and hollow
 How the big tears follow—follow
 Down his face in piteous chase !
 How they follow—follow, follow
 Without stop, drop by drop !
 How they follow drop by drop !

GEN. JOHN BURGOYNE.

nameless tints of wondrous beauty. Not a breath of wind ruffled the surface of the lake. All the glowing splendors of the firmament above the waters were reflected in the firmament beneath the waters. It seemed as if we had at last found the charmed spot where the rainbow touches the earth. But the shadows of evening soon obscured the radiant picture.

In a short time we reached the Indian's shanty. It was situated at the head of a small bay or cove that indented the shore, and in the valley of a little brook that there runs into the lake. It was a rude, frail structure, made after the fashion of the wilderness. There were two upright posts, some six feet in height and ten apart, with crotches at the top, across which a pole was laid. From this pole others extended, upon one side only, in a slanting direction to the ground, some eight feet distant. This framework was covered with large pieces of spruce bark, peeled from some neighboring trees, upon the slanting roof and ends only, leaving the front side open to the weather. The earth under the shanty was thickly strewn with freshly-cut hemlock boughs to the depth of a foot or more. These fragrant boughs, with a couple of bear-skins for a covering, served for a bed.

Directly in front of the shanty a cheerful fire was burning when we arrived. Over the fire a steaming pot was hanging, sustained by a small pole resting upon two upright crotched sticks. The Indian was cooking a venison stew for his supper, and while thus engaged had heard the report of my rifle.

With our hatchets we soon added to his scanty supply of wood sufficient for the night, and, dressing the deer, soon had our own savory steaks smoking over the bright coals of the fire. One of our party had shot a pair of young black ducks, and these, whizzing away in a frying-pan, promised no mean addition to our fare. To these we added some brook-trout, cooked in true backwoods style,—a fish that is so exquisitely delicate that, like the ripe strawberry, it will bear neither keeping nor transportation,

but to be enjoyed in its perfection must be cooked and eaten when but just dripping from its native element. The old Indian's mess of pottage and some potatoes roasted in the ashes completed our sumptuous repast.

After supper we piled brush and huge logs upon the fire, and, lighting our pipes, reclined upon the fragrant bed of boughs to rest our limbs, weary with the day's tramp and excitement.

The flames lit up the forest around us, the nearer trees standing out in bright relief against the sombre shadows beyond. Above the trees, the stars looked down from out their awful depths. The night winds sighing through the pines filled the air with gentle murmurs, the brook answering with its prattle, gurgling over its stony bed. We were within the great heart of Nature. Her pulses were throbbing all around us. We could hear the perpetual hum of her myriad voices. We could feel the magnetism of her all-pervading presence.

V.

Thus engaged, and with such surroundings, we were in just the mood to hear and enjoy the old Indian's tale. I will not trouble the reader with his broken English, but give the substance of it in my own words. Taking three or four strong whiffs from his pipe, he began :

"You must know that I belong to the Mohawks, one of the Five Nations. Our tribe in ancient days built its lodges along the valley of the Mohawk and upon both sides of the Hudson, near the junction of the two rivers. It is a tradition of our fathers that the Five Nations first came out of the ground from their subterranean home at some place southeasterly of the Oswego River, in the Lesser Wilderness, and from thence spread out into the different parts of the country they afterward inhabited. The Five Nations called themselves *Ho-de-no-sau-nee*, which means in the Indian tongue, 'The People of the Long House.' The Mo-

hawks guarded the eastern door of the long house, and the Senecas the western door, while the Oneidas, Onondagas, and Cayugas took care of the interior, the great central council fire being always kept brightly burning in the country of the Onondagas.

“Before the union of the nations was accomplished by the exertions of the great sachem *Hi-a-wat-ha*, the Mohawks wandered away up the Hudson into the valley of the St. Lawrence, and built their lodges and planted their corn-fields near where Montreal now stands. To the north and west of them dwelt a powerful nation called by our people Adirondacks, and afterward named by the French Algonquins. The Adirondacks soon became jealous of our growing strength, and, seeking a pretence for war, drove our people back again to the valley of the Mohawk. Our tribe not long after united their fortunes with their sister tribes, and became a part of the mighty people called by the English the Five Nations, by the French the Iroquois, and by themselves the *Ho-de-no-sau-nee*.

“While our people were in the land of the Adirondacks they were governed by an old sachem named *Ho-ha-do-ra*. His wife, *Mo-ne-ta*, was young, and one of the most beautiful women of her tribe. She bore him two sons, whom he called *Ta-en-da-ra* and *O-nos-qua*.

“It so happened that in an attack upon their village, before our people were overpowered and driven from the St. Lawrence, a band of Adirondack warriors took *O-nos-qua*, the sachem’s youngest son, captive and hurried him off into their own country, where he was saved from torture by being adopted by an Adirondack woman who had lost her own son upon the war-path. *Ho-ha-do-ra* made many attempts to recapture *O-nos-qua*, but they all proved unavailing.

“With a heavy heart the old sachem, with his wife and remaining son, led his people back to their former home upon the Mohawk and Hudson, leaving his darling boy in hopeless captivity in the land of his enemies. The old sachem soon sank beneath the

heavy blow, and when near his end called his son *Ta-en-da-ra* to his side and said,—

“ ‘*Ta-en-da-ra*, my son, your father will soon go to the happy hunting-grounds, while your brother *O-nos-qua* is still a slave in the land of the Adirondacks. Swear by the Great Spirit that *O-nos-qua*’s bones shall rest by the side of *Ho-ha-do-ra*’s, *Mo-ne-ta*’s, and *Ta-en-da-ra*’s on the banks of the Mohawk.’

“ ‘I swear!’ said *Ta-en-da-ra*; ‘but who will take care of *Mo-ne-ta*, my mother, while I am gone for my brother?’

“ ‘My people shall do it,’ replied the dying sachem; ‘*Mo-ne-ta* shall be their queen until her sons come back.’

“In a little while the old sachem died, and *Mo-ne-ta*, after the custom of her people, sat up four nights by a fire lighted upon the river-bank to guide his soul into the spirit world. As she sat and mourned by the fire through the dismal nights, she sang a low, sweet dirge for the dead, and the soft cadences of her melodious voice rose and fell through the recesses of the tangled forest like the wail of some wild bird mourning for its lost mate.

“After the days of her mourning were ended she called her son to her. ‘*Ta-en-da-ra*,’ she said, ‘your father’s bones cannot rest alone. His soul cannot be happy while *O-nos-qua* is a slave. Go and find your brother in the land of the Adirondacks. *Mo-ne-ta* will kindle a fire upon the beacon-rock and watch until her sons come to her. When you are coming back with your brother from toward the setting sun, or from under the moveless star, you will see the light of my beacon-fire from afar, and will know that *Mo-ne-ta* is still waiting for her children. Go.’

“*Ta-en-da-ra* then went to a lonely spot in the forest and fasted seven days, to invoke his guardian spirit. He then painted his face, struck his tomahawk into the war-post, and put on his plumes for the war-path. With his quiver full of arrows and his trusty bow, he set out in his bark canoe up the Hudson. When he came to the end of his first day’s journey, he looked

back toward his home and saw the faint glimmer of *Mo-ne-ta's* beacon-light appearing like a rising star upon the horizon.

"It was long, weary years before he saw it again. He went away a youthful, valiant brave. He came back after many sufferings had bowed his frame, an old man, tottering beneath the weight of his brother's bones, which he bore with him in solemn triumph, as his life's great trophy.

"Of his journeys, of his bold exploits, of his captivity, of his adoption by the Adirondacks, his meeting with his long-lost brother, his brother's death, of his escape at last and his journey home from the St. Lawrence, I shall not now speak. My story is of *Mo-ne-ta*.

"The clan to which *Mo-ne-ta* belonged had its lodges on the plain which lies on the east bank of the Hudson, directly opposite the mouths of the Mohawk. In the rear of the plain was a tangled swamp. Beyond the swamp was a high hill, upon the top of which was the beacon-rock, overlooking a vast country up and down the river. From the wigwams near the river a trail led through the swamp and up the hill to the beacon-rock.

"When the shades of night were falling, upon the day of *Tu-en-da-ra's* departure, *Mo-ne-ta* wended her way through the swamp and up the hill to the beacon-rock. She gathered some sticks, and, rubbing two dry ones together, kindled a fire upon the highest point of the rock, and sat down beside it. She was then just in the first sweet prime of womanhood, and scarcely forty summers had passed over her faultless form and features. Her raven tresses hung loosely down her shoulders, and rested on the rock around her. Thus she sat and mourned. Her heart was far away in the wilderness with her wandering son and his captive brother,—in the great wilderness that lies beneath the moveless star.

"Moon after moon waxed and waned, and still they came not. Then summer after summer tipped the fir-trees with fresh green,

and called back the birds, but *Ta-en-da-ra* and *O-nos-qua*, where were they? Still she lighted the fire upon the beacon-rock, and sat and mourned. Her people did not forget the words of their dying chief. They filled her wigwam with venison and corn.

“As the seasons glided by she grew old, and was no longer able to find sticks sufficient for her beacon-fire, and the young women of her clan gathered them for her, and kept her signal-fire brightly burning.

“It is said that the Indian never weeps. This is true of him while upon the war-path,—while enduring torture and while in the presence of the stranger. But by the side of his dying kindred and his own fire, his tears come out of their pent-up fountains like those of other men.

“Each night, just before *Mo-ne-ta* left the rock to return to sleep in her wigwam, she would repeat her low sweet funeral dirge, and then tears would come to her relief, and save her heart from breaking. Thus tears, blessed tears, dropped upon the beacon-rock night after night for year after year. At length *Mo-ne-ta*’s mind began to wander,—began to give way beneath the constant strain. Her people then had to lead her up to her place upon the rock and light her fire for her. Yet each night the dirge was sung and the rock watered with her tears. Thus passed five hundred moons and *Ta-en-da-ra* had not come.

“At last, upon a sultry evening of the green-corn moon, *Mo-ne-ta* had been led to the rock and her fire lighted. There she sat just as she did forty years before, but now she was old and gray, and crazed with ceaseless watching.

“As the sun went down, long banks of heavy clouds in the southwest betokened a coming storm. As the evening advanced, the sky became overcast, the wind came up in sudden gusts, and the lightning began to play vividly with that incessant glare that sometimes accompanies such storms in the valley of the Hudson.

“From the lodges near the river the beacon-light could be seen

faintly glowing in the darkness between the flashes. When the flashes came, the beacon-rock, with *Mo-ne-ta* sitting on its summit, stood out in sharp relief against the dark clouds beyond.

“Moved by some strange impulse, *Mo-ne-ta* struck up an Indian song, wild and sweet, that floated out upon the troubled elements, and while the wind would lull, filled the valley with its strange melodies. Had the wild tokens of the coming tempest stirred up the latent fires in *Mo-ne-ta*’s bosom and brought back her wandering reason? Or had some spirit-bird fanned her face with its wings and warned the mother’s heart of the coming of her returning son? It was the spirit-bird.

“Weary and worn with travel, *Ta-en-da-ra* was even then going up the trail to the beacon-rock. He catches the wild snatches of his mother’s song, and in an instant the vigor of youth returns to his limbs. In a moment more he is standing by her side. A wild shriek of tumultuous joy from *Mo-ne-ta* rings through the valley high above the voices of the storm, and awakens the very echoes of the forest.

“The people rushed out from their wigwams. In the bright glare of the lightning they beheld in *tableau vivant* upon the beacon-rock *Ta-en-da-ra*, standing upon its summit, with *Mo-ne-ta* bowing her head upon his bosom, mother and son in loving embrace. But such unutterable rapture is not for mortals. In an instant more a bolt came down from heaven, jarring the earth with its violence, and shaking the beacon-rock to its very foundations. The people, trembling, saw in the lightning the manifest presence of the Great Spirit. They heard His terrible voice in the thunder, and, struck with unutterable awe, they shrank back to their wigwams.

“In the morning the people gathered again around the beacon-rock. Its surface was riven and shattered by the bolt. *O-nos-qua*’s scattered bones were there, but no trace of *Mo-ne-ta* nor of *Ta-en-da-ra* was to be seen. Then it was that the people believed that

that mother and her son had so consecrated their souls by a life-long sacrifice upon the altar of true affection that in the moment of their supreme felicity they had become too pure for earth and were absorbed—translated—into the presence of the Great Spirit by the power of His lightnings, which they thought were but sparks struck with awful thunderings from the eternal fire of His glory. And while they stood gazing upon this strange scene in awe and wonder, the sun came up over the eastern hills and shed his beams upon it, when, lo! they for the first time saw that the rock was glittering all over with sparkling gems.

“‘See! see!’ they cried with one accord. ‘See *Mo-ne-ta’s* tears, *Mo-ne-ta’s* tears!’

“So free from earthly dross had been that mother’s tears shed for her children that the Great Spirit, by the refining fire of His glory, had changed them into crystals, into glittering immortelles, such as cover forever the shining trees in the hunting-grounds of the blessed, and to this day those crystallized tears are still to be seen imbedded in the solid rock, there to remain while the earth shall last as bright mementos of a mother’s changeless love.

“When the pale-face came across the big water and saw them he exclaimed, ‘See! see! A diamond rock! a diamond rock!’”

The tears of the dying deer falling upon the bright sands of the beach had suggested the old Indian’s story.

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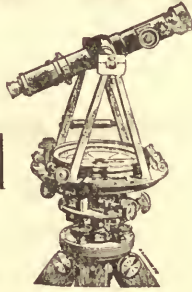
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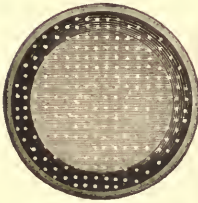
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